

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Healthcare Association of New York State
One Empire Drive
Rensselaer, NY 12144

Greater New York Hospitals Association
555 West 57th Street
15th Floor
New York, NY 10019

May 6th, 2020

Dear New York Hospital CEOs and Chief Administrators,

We write to urge that your hospitals create new Compassionate Companion Volunteer Programs to connect patients with their loved ones while they are hospitalized and to provide companionship for those patients without family members available. We stand with our colleagues in the New York State Assembly and Senate, and the New York City Council in supporting this proposal.

We commend our hospitals and staff for the work they have been doing on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. You have all demonstrated incredible leadership during this crisis, and demonstrated to the nation New York's strength. While tens of thousands of New Yorkers are hospitalized due to coronavirus, all too many are isolated from family and loved ones in their time of need.

These Compassionate Companions programs will identify individuals who can aid in non-medical, quality-of-life activities to ease a patient's and their family's loneliness due to separation. Companions can assist patients to connect with loved ones via phone calls or video chats and provide direct support in times of need. If patients have difficulty communicating, volunteers can help keep families informed, and support staff with strengthening cultural competency and overcoming language barriers between the patient and staff.

Compassionate Companion volunteers would also provide some much-needed relief to our overwhelmed hospital staff, by assisting with some of the patients' non-medical needs. For the patient's comfort and speedy recuperation, if there is a family member that is capable of doing the same kind of work, they should take preference as long as they meet the criteria and have been appropriately trained.

Of course, it would be essential to minimize the likelihood that Compassionate Companions would become infected with COVID-19. Compassionate Helpers would require personal protective equipment and training and would follow any volunteer protocols already in place, for example, receiving the tuberculosis vaccine or other typical measures that are taken to maintain patient, staff, and volunteer health and safety. To the extent medical science develops the ability to detect immunity from COVID-19, for example through antibody testing, the program could prioritize those with immunity in accepting volunteers and family members. We would

encourage the State and City health departments to work with you to develop standards for selection, training, and deploying Compassionate Companions in your institutions.

The hospitals will have control over who is accepted as a Compassionate Companion and can terminate any individual who is not working in the best interest of the patients and families involved. We believe that such a program will give peace of mind to patients and their families, as well as help lessen the strain on our frontline healthcare workers. We therefore offer our support for the creation of this program and stand ready to assist with any statutory or logistical challenges that may be an issue.

Sincerely,



Max Rose
Member of Congress



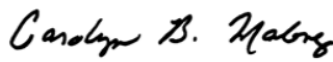
Nydia Velázquez
Member of Congress



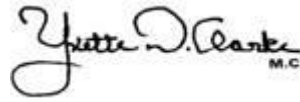
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



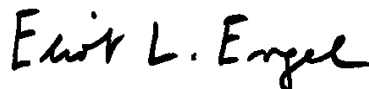
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress



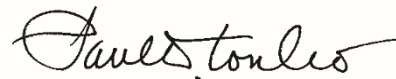
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Member of Congress